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# **Statehood and Refugees: Patterns of Integration and Segregation of Refugee Populations in Lebanon from a Comparative Perspective**

**Abstract:** Scholarly debate has persuasively highlighted the inherent tension between refugees and the modern state. Yet, how do state-refugee relations unfold in practice when considering the historical and social specificity of a single state? Is there a heuristic value in going beyond the premises of a general state-refugee binary and adopt a state-specific approach? These questions are addressed through an analysis based on the modelling of statehood in Lebanon and comparing five cases of refugee-state relations in this country. This method allows explaining the variation in degrees of segregation or integration of refugees and shows that the mode of politicization of refugees is the key factor in understanding this variation. Not all refugees and not all states are the same; the variance of state-refugee relations is best explained from a perspective that considers the historically situated nature of statehood.

**Keywords:** Statehood, Refugees, Lebanon, Integration, Segregation

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The scholarly debate on refugees has constantly highlighted a seemingly unsolvable tension between modern states and refugee populations. Hannah Arendt has observed how being a refugee entails exclusion from the political community depriving persons of “the right to have rights.”<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Agamben has pointed out that refugees are the living proof of the fiction of sovereignty and confute the equation of nativity and nationality as the foundation of the modern nation-state.<sup>3</sup> Heather Rae has shown how the formation of modern nation-states relies on processes of “pathological homogenisation” of the political community which generates refugees and statelessness.<sup>4</sup> Emma Haddad has claimed that the formation of an international society of nation states has produced the conditions of existence of refugees as populations stranded “between sovereigns”.<sup>5</sup>

This study further explores the refugee-state relation to add complexity to the idea that state and refugees are entities inherently difficult to reconcile. I argue that, differently from simple dichotomy that contrasts the modern state with the refugee, an analytical perspective which focuses on the social and historical character of statehood explains more exhaustively the dynamics of integration or segregation that refugees

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<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful to the convenors and participants of the workshop organised by the Citizenship Standing Group at the ECPR Joint Sessions held at the Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna in 2016, for providing helpful feedback on a previous version of this paper. The feedback of the two anonymous reviewers of this journal has also been useful and constructive. The research presented in this paper was funded through the Early Career Fellowship Grant awarded by The Leverhulme Trust.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1st ed.(New York,: Harcourt, 1951), 208.

<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, Theory out of Bounds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Emma Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society: Between Sovereigns*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

experience in host states. Whereas state-refugee relations are always complex, an analytical perspective on statehood enables understanding of the diversification of these relations from case to case.

Instead of proposing inter-state comparisons<sup>6</sup> or comparison between different refugee regimes;<sup>7</sup> the following analysis juxtaposes refugee populations within the social and historical contingency of one state, and aims to deepen our understanding of what causes the segregation or inclusion of refugees.

Migration studies literature has previously researched the processes of migrants' integration or segregation relying on 'national modelling' methods to explain the diverse policies and outcomes of these processes, especially in the western world.<sup>8</sup> This study contributes to this approach, but differs in its focus on statehood<sup>9</sup> – instead of nationality – and in the consideration of the specific case of Lebanon and its refugee populations.

The essay begins by identifying three aspects characterising Lebanese statehood: confessional politics, uncertain geopolitical identity, and exclusive political community. Then, a structured comparison of the politicisation, religious identity, and socio-

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander Betts, *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2013); Antigone Lyberaki et al., "Migrants' Strategies and Migration Policies: Towards a Comparative Picture," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 6, no. 3 (2008); Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan, eds., *Refugees and International Relations*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Phil Orchard, *A Right to Flee: Refugees, States, and the Construction of International Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Rae, *State Identities*.

<sup>8</sup> Christian Joppke, "Beyond National Models: Civic Integration Policies for Immigrants in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 30, no. 1 (2007); Remus Gabriel Anghel, "On Successfulness: How National Models of Integration Policies Shape Migrants' Incorporation," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 10, no. 3 (2012); Veit Bader, "The Governance of Islam in Europe: The Perils of Modelling," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007).

<sup>9</sup> Statehood is conceptualized, herein, as the articulation of the state-citizen relation shaping the bureaucratic, legal, social, and political context within which forced migrants set up their space and modes of survival.

economic status of the Armenian, Kurd, Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian refugees in Lebanon follows.

Admittedly, a five case studies analysis allows only for a macroscopic approach to each of these; this is an acknowledged limitation of this study which does not have the ambition of providing a detailed account for each. Yet, this macroscopic comparative approach has the benefit of showing that state-refugee relations vary significantly from case to case from a degree of relative integration to outright segregation. This aspect is different from the blanket incompatibility between modern statehood and refugees that much of the scholarly debate has exposed, because it shows that this incompatibility can vary and sometimes be renegotiated if we consider the social and historical nature of statehood.

Whereas Arendt, Agamben, and others are right in advancing an “incompatibility thesis” highlighting that the modern state can hardly be receptive towards refugees and is, in fact, a cause of their existence; it is against the background of Lebanon’s socio-political fragmentation, its geopolitical uncertainty, and its exclusive political community, that we can explain how state and refugee populations have attempted to manage this relationship, sometimes achieving coexistence, sometimes corroborating the incompatibility thesis.

With reference to the cases under analysis, we notice that integration or partial integration occur when refugees’ politicisation is adaptive. Conversely, segregation, expulsion, and sometimes the attempt to physically eliminate refugees, have recurred when their politicisation has been highly contentious. Perhaps surprisingly for a confessional state as Lebanon, religious identity only matters for integration as long as is used as an instrument to be co-opted by the political clientele of the Lebanese system,

in conjunction with adaptive politicisation.<sup>10</sup> As regards socio-economic status, the cases under analysis show that higher degrees of education and wealth often lead to better integration, but some poor and extremely poor refugees could find ways to integrate within the Lebanese context.

Thus, the study reaches two main conclusions. First – from a methodological perspective – the analysis of statehood has heuristic value in explaining refugee-state relations; profiling the specific character of statehood allows revisiting state-refugee relations and go beyond the crude binary of modern statehood versus refugees. Secondly, the case of Lebanon shows that politicisation is a crucial determinant of the dynamics of assimilation or segregation; religious identity and socio-economic status play an influential role but – differently from politicisation – they are not necessary conditions for integration or a sufficient cause for segregation.

[TABLE 1]

### **Lebanese Statehood: Confessionalism, Geopolitical Uncertainty, and Exclusive Political Community**

An exhaustive account of Lebanese statehood exceeds the scope of this study,<sup>11</sup> but for

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<sup>10</sup> The concept of politicisation is hereby understood as a process of transition from humanitarian subject as “refugee” (mainly a recipient of aid characterised by “needs”) to a political agent who engages with the political dynamics of the host country. This concept may be interpreted as related to the idea of “citizenship activism” as theorised by Isin. Engin F. Isin, “Theorizing Acts of Citizenship,” in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Greg Marc Nielsen, (London ; New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2008). Yet the complexity of this conceptualisation prevents us from elaborate further on this subject, and instead we opt for the more general politicisation instead of “citizenship activism”.

<sup>11</sup> See for thorough accounts Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985); Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon; a Political Essay* (Beirut,: Lebanon Bookshop, 1968); Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation* (London: Centre for Lebanese Studies in association with I.B. Tauris, 1993); Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon, a Shattered Country: Myths and Realities of the Wars in Lebanon* (New York, N.Y.: New York, N.Y.: Holmes & Meier, 1996); Reinoud Leenders, *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon* (Ithaca: Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); U. Makdisi, “Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon,” *Middle East Report*, no. 200 (1996); Samir Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Samir Khalaf, *Civil*

the purpose of this analysis it shall be sufficient to show why confessionalism, political exclusiveness, and geopolitical uncertainty are crucial aspects defining Lebanese statehood. This becomes most apparent through an overview of the process of formation of the Lebanese state.

### ***Confessional Politics***

In 1861, the Christian Maronite community living in the area of Mount Lebanon was capable – with the support of France – of establishing the Mutasarrifate, which constituted the earliest administrative entity at the core of the emergence of Lebanon as a state. The Mutasarrifate was given a higher degree of administrative autonomy, compared to the Vilajets of Beirut, Damascus, Tripoli and Aleppo, because the Christian community had suffered attacks in the second half of the nineteenth century from other religious communities, and therefore both the Maronites and their foreign patrons thought that a separate political order could provide protection.<sup>12</sup> As the Maronite Patriarch would have written in 1926, “The original idea that served as a basis for the establishment of the Lebanese state was to make it into a refuge for all the Christians of the Orient and an abode of undivided fidelity to France.”<sup>13</sup>

With the division of the Middle East originating from the San Remo Conference of 1920, the mostly Maronite Christian area of Mount Lebanon was expanded to include the areas of Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre, and the Biqā’ Valley. This decision to create a

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*and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Contact*, The History and Society of the Modern Middle East (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Nadim Shehadi, *The Idea of Lebanon: Economy and State in the Cénacle Libanais 1946-54*, ed. Centre for Lebanese Studies (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1987); David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East* (New York: Nation Books, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Khalaf, *Lebanon's Predicament*, 45-72.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 232.

‘Grand Liban’ – advocated also by the Maronite community – brought into the borders of the new entity a Muslim population almost equivalent in size to the Christian population.<sup>14</sup>

The expansion from a mainly Maronite state to a ‘Greater Lebanon’ changed the confessional composition of the population. The configuration of the Lebanese political community further diversified through the inclusion of other religious denominations (Sunni, Shia, Druze, Jews and other Christian groups), diverse economic and social groups (such as the agricultural south and the commercial cities on the coast) and a plethora of kin groups related to family allegiances. The foundations of the state were originally based on dominant Christian elite, but its actual social and religious composition became more diversified than the original project of ‘Christian Lebanon’ had been envisioned.

In 1926, a constitution laid the foundations of its institutional architecture. It formally established the Lebanese Republic, based on a bicameral system under the control of the French Mandate regulated by the League of Nations.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, this form of state changed from parliamentary to republican model, with the merging of the two chambers into a single parliament and the empowerment of the president over the executive cabinet.<sup>16</sup>

In 1932, a census of Lebanon’s population took place (see below) that would become a milestone in the definition of Lebanon’s political community.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> Thibaut Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, and Confessional Democracy in Lebanon," *Middle East Law and Governance* 6, no. 3 (2014): 254; Thibaut Jaulin, "Démographie Et Politique Au Liban Sous Le Mandat," *Histoire & mesure* XXIV, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>15</sup> See Digithèque de matériaux juridiques et politiques, "Constitution Du 23 Mai 1926," <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/constit/lb1926i.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Bahige Tabbarah, "The Lebanese Constitution," *Arab Law Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1997).

<sup>17</sup> Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932."



independent state of 1943 slightly amended the 1926 republican constitution; but what most significantly influenced independent Lebanon was the power-sharing agreement that followed among the main confessional groups. With the departure of the French administration, it was necessary to devise a mechanism to control Lebanon's internal fragmentation between religious groups, especially the Maronite Christians and the Sunni Muslims.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the National Pact (*al-Mithāq al-Waṭani*) emerged superimposing over the formal constitution a sectarian distribution of offices between Christians and Muslims in government, parliament,<sup>19</sup> and in the rest of the state bureaucracy. Christians – with control of the presidential office and the majority of seats in the parliament – retained a prevalent share of power in the state. The Sunni groups were given control of the office of the prime minister, whereas the Shi'i community was given the chair of the parliament. The pact also established that Lebanon's geopolitical role would be balanced between independence from the West and autonomy from regional dynamics as pan-Arabism and the Cold War.<sup>20</sup>

For about a decade, independent Lebanon managed to become a relatively functional political system with a remarkable economic record, but the divisions within its society rendered it intrinsically fragile. The confessional system was not sufficient to guarantee stability and governance for the country because it entrenched its divisions instead of resolving them. Already in 1958 both domestic and regional dynamics put the political system under pressure, which was on the verge of erupting into civil war.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 184-85.

<sup>19</sup> The parliament was already split between Christian and Muslims as a transitional clause of the 1927 Constitution. See Tabbarah, "Lebanese Constitution."

<sup>20</sup> Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*, 43-45; Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 186-89.

<sup>21</sup> Fawaz Gerges, "Lebanon," in *The Cold War and the Middle East*, ed. Avi Shlaim and Yazid Sayigh, (Oxford: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 77-101.

Subsequently, fragmentation and sectarian antagonisms were exacerbated by regional conflicts and domestic tensions,<sup>22</sup> and in 1975, Lebanon precipitated in a civil war that lasted until 1989.

Notwithstanding a nominal commitment to abolish it, also after the civil war, confessionalism survived as the chief principle of political and social (dis)order in the country, although it was slightly revised to roughly equalise powers between Christians and Muslims (in particular, the Sunni groups). The contexts of war, instability, and the interests of political groups in preserving the status quo have precluded the possibility of abolishing the sectarian system.<sup>23</sup>

The Lebanese confessional system, therefore, remains a crucial component of Lebanese statehood to which all refugee populations migrating to Lebanon inevitably had to relate when fleeing to Lebanon.

### ***Geopolitical Uncertainty***

A second key aspect defining Lebanese statehood is its geopolitical ambivalence, which has had the effect of exposing this state to external dynamics of conflict.

Originally, Lebanon was ‘carved out’ of a broader project attempting to establish a ‘greater Syria’ (*Bilād al-Shām*), which eventually failed to materialize. This has generated regional and domestic tensions that have never been fully resolved. At the root of this problem is uncertainty within Lebanon about where Lebanon stands in the geopolitical map of the region.

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<sup>22</sup> Hudson, *The Precarious Republic*.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*, The Contemporary Middle East (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 64-82; Are J. Knudsen and Michael Kerr, eds., *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution*; Janine A. Clark and Bassel F. Salloukh, "Elite Strategies, Civil Society, and Sectarian Identities in Postwar Lebanon," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 4 (2013).

Christian political elites have more often endorsed Lebanese nationalism, supporting the idea of Lebanon as an autonomous entity from the Arab world, oriented towards friendly relations with the western political sphere. In contrast, Lebanese pan-Arabists (more commonly part of the Sunni political groups), have seen the Lebanese political identity as deeply connected with the Arab world. In the most radical cases, these groups even consider Lebanon an organic component of Syria, thus rejecting the partition subsequent to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. These divisions have been exacerbated also by the fact that they partly overlap with confessional differences.<sup>24</sup>

Since the decline of pan-Arabism and the end of the Cold War, the antagonism between pan-Arab nationalists and Lebanese nationalists has gradually been replaced by alignment with the two main regional axes of alliances in the region. On one hand, the rise of Sunni political groups in post-War Lebanon in alliance with some of the Christian parties has been supported by the conservative monarchies, led by Saudi Arabia in conjunction with western protection. On the other hand, groups such as Hezbollah and its Christian allies have benefited from the protection of the coalition between Syria and Iran, under the influence of Russia.

These clashing views on Lebanon's international role have had the effect of making this country a catalyst for regional and global tensions, whereby international actors have been able to recruit sympathisers or to form para-military groups to project their influence in a fragmented institutional and social context. Lebanon has been a battleground for most of the main conflicts of the Middle East. It was exposed to and directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>25</sup> Since the Iranian revolution, it has been

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<sup>24</sup> Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 169-74.

<sup>25</sup> Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries: A People's History*, Middle East Series No 3 (London: Zed Press, 1979); Rex Brynen, "PLO Policy in Lebanon: Legacies and Lessons," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 2 (1989).

entangled in the regional antagonism between the Islamic Republic of Iran and its enemies.<sup>26</sup> Overall, the fifteen year long civil war was characterised by the interplay of local dynamics, regional conflicts, and the Cold War.

The result of this ambivalence is a state characterised by an unresolved geopolitical uncertainty. The refugee populations hosted in Lebanon were often pushed into this country by the very conflicts which have been affecting Lebanon's statehood; to different degrees, refugee populations have been recruited in these struggles or engulfed into their unmerciful mechanics.

### ***Exclusive Political Community***

The third aspect of Lebanese statehood relates to how membership to its citizenship has been regulated. Citizenship, by definition, constitutes an exclusive political community but in the Lebanese case exclusiveness is particularly strict. Lebanese nationality law applies as main criterion of membership patrilineal *ius sanguinis*.<sup>27</sup> This standard is the result of a historical process in which political elites have tried to shape Lebanese citizenship to preserve confessional and sectarian proportions, while the country was undergoing demographic changes due to emigration and immigration flows, including the arrival of refugee populations.

The origins of a legal regulation of citizenship in Lebanon date to the 1869 Ottoman reform of citizenship.<sup>28</sup> The innovation was that the new Ottoman law

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<sup>26</sup> H. E. Chehabi and Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years* (Oxford; London; New York: Centre for Lebanese Studies; In association with I.B. Tauris, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> There are few very rare exceptions in which *ius soli* can be applied for example for some orphans Association Frontiers Ruwad, *Invisible Citizens: Humiliation and a Life in the Shadows: A Legal and Policy Study on Statelessness in Lebanon: English Version 2011* (Beirut, Lebanon: Frontiers Ruwad Association, 2011), 58. A foreigner woman can also opt for Lebanese citizenship by marrying a Lebanese man. Another way to acquire citizenship is by presidential decree, see the discussion below.

<sup>28</sup> Gianluca Paolo Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-State*, Imiscoe Research (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 73-74.

acknowledged citizenship not on the basis of religious affiliation, but on *ius sanguinis* complemented by *ius soli*. The *ius soli* principle included habitual residence within the region of Ottoman jurisdiction. In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne regulated the rules for the acquisition of citizenship in the countries that emerged from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The French High Commissioner issued a decision (*arrêté* n. 2825) which declared all former Ottomans habitually<sup>29</sup> resident in Lebanon on 30 August 1924 Lebanese citizens. Other articles of the same law established that persons of Lebanese origin not present on Lebanese soil could opt for Lebanese citizenship by virtue of the ‘right of option’ within two years.<sup>30</sup> The possibility of opting for Lebanese citizenship was extended for decades.<sup>31</sup> This exceptional extension of the right of option benefited the Christian population of Lebanon, which was the most affected by the emigration process.<sup>32</sup>

As explained by Thibaut Jaulin,<sup>33</sup> Lebanon, at this time was perceived as an ‘emigration country’. Yet, at a later stage, it also became a country of immigration, as refugee populations began to flee there. Within this context, the principle of *ius sanguinis* gained prominence over *ius soli* in regulating nationality in Lebanon.<sup>34</sup> This is because *ius sanguinis* (i.e. the rule that nationality is acquired by direct family lineage) reserved the status of citizen to descendants of Lebanese only, and – in the interest of

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<sup>29</sup> The key word ‘habitually’ was particularly ambiguous and its application has been the subject of much dispute, see for example Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932," 226.

<sup>30</sup> Treaty of Lausanne, Art. 31-33.

<sup>31</sup> Frontiers Ruwad, *Invisible Citizens*, 42.

<sup>32</sup> Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, ," 256; Jaulin, "Démographie Et Politique," 198-203.

<sup>33</sup> Thibaut Jaulin, "« C’est Bien La Loi D’un Pays À Forte Émigration » Principes De La Nationalité Et Représentations De La Nation Au Liban," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 137(2015).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-30.

ruling elites – it artificially preserved confessional and sectarian balances while the actual demographics of the country were changing.

In 1925, a ‘law on Lebanese nationality’<sup>35</sup> established that patrilineal *ius sanguinis* was the main principle conferring Lebanese citizenship. Additionally, Article 3 of the same law stated that foreigners legally resident in the country for more than an uninterrupted five years, persons married to a Lebanese woman and resident in Lebanon for one year, or those who have given services to the country, could obtain Lebanese nationality upon request through a presidential decree.<sup>36</sup> But, in 1939, this article was abrogated.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, in 1946, a new law was approved, establishing a set of parameters causing the loss of Lebanese nationality, especially targeting naturalized citizens.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the only way to become Lebanese was by having a Lebanese father or by marrying<sup>39</sup> a Lebanese man or through a decree issued by the President the Republic, who according to the Lebanese confessional system is always a Christian. It is hardly coincidental that this restriction on naturalisation procedures and the revocation of previously granted naturalisations took place at the time in which Lebanon was shifting from emigration country to immigration destination, thus corroborating Jaulin’s thesis that Lebanon’s nationality law has been influenced by its demographic movements.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Arrêté* 15/s of 1925.

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Interior of Lebanon, *Qawānīn Lubnān: Majmū‘at Al-Nuṣūṣ Al-Tashrī‘īyah wa-al-Tanzīmīyah*, ed. Ministry of Interior, vol. 15(Beirut: Dār al-Manshūrāt al-Ḥuqūqīyah, 2001), 7158.

<sup>37</sup> Regulation N°122 L . R ., dated 19 / 06 / 1939. Whether the abrogation of this law is effective or not is disputed due to a set of contradictive provisions and the fact that naturalisation decrees have been issued also after the abrogation of article 3, see Frontiers Ruwad, *Invisible Citizens*, 69-70.

<sup>38</sup> Law of 31 January 1946.

<sup>39</sup> Consider that in Lebanese law marriage is regulated by Personal Status Law which is under the authority of religious institutions, therefore marriage can only be stipulated between persons of the same religious sect.

<sup>40</sup> Jaulin, "« C’est Bien La Loi D’un Pays À Forte Émigration », " 27-29.

In addition to nationality legislation, a process of demographic engineering took place with regard to the census of the population within the Lebanese territory of 1932.<sup>41</sup> According to Maktabi, this survey of the population was designed to favour the interests of the Christian community.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Jaulin has illustrated how the intricate legal debate on the inclusion of the Lebanese living abroad into the Lebanese census is part of a “fabrication of demographic statistics” reflecting political interests.<sup>43</sup> It was on the basis of this controversial census that the power distribution among different sects became a norm with the National Pact of 1946, and attributed to the Christians (especially the Maronite) the biggest power share. Notwithstanding the census, the actual proportions of religious groups in Lebanon are today the subject of dispute.<sup>44</sup>

Extraordinarily, naturalisation also took place in 1994, when the government of the Sunni leader Rafiq al-Ḥariri issued a decree which naturalised 150,000 individuals, two thirds of them Muslims and probably about half of them Sunni.<sup>45</sup> This naturalisation decree proved controversial and created a legal and political stalemate thus far unresolved.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the status of those naturalized through this decree has

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<sup>41</sup> A previous census took place in 1921.

<sup>42</sup> Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932," 233-38.

<sup>43</sup> Jaulin, "Démographie Et Politique," 208.

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad A. Faour, "Religion, Demography, and Politics in Lebanon," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007).

<sup>45</sup> According to many this naturalisation had important electoral repercussions in favour of Syrian influence in Lebanon see Guita G. Hourani and Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, "Naturalized Citizens: Political Participation, Voting Behavior, and Impact on Elections in Lebanon (1996-2007)," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 13, no. 2 (2012): 189; 96-200; Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, ," 265.

<sup>46</sup> Melkar el-Khoury and Thibaut Jaulin, "Eudo Citizenship Observatory Country Report: Lebanon," in *EUDO Citizenship Observatory* (Florence/Edinburgh: Roberty Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Edinburgh University Law School, 2012), 11-12.

remained ambivalent.<sup>47</sup> In this respect, Jaulin has noticed how “the discretionary power of the executive over the naturalisation has contributed to changing the Lebanese citizenship into a resource to be distributed by political leaders. Naturalisation has, thus, been a key instrument for the development of political clienteles.”<sup>48</sup>

The result of this exclusive form of citizenship is that tens of thousands of autochthonous individuals are currently stateless in Lebanon.<sup>49</sup> For example, some of the population in the north and south of Lebanon boycotted a census held in 1921, therefore could not formally prove that they were living in Lebanon in 1924 and were registered as ‘foreigners’ instead of citizens.<sup>50</sup> Lebanon also has a Bedouin population, mostly made up of people not registered as citizens thus remaining stateless at the present time.<sup>51</sup>

Although reliable figures are not available, the persons affected by partial forms of citizenship in Lebanon<sup>52</sup> or statelessness are in the order of the tens of thousands. In a conversation with a Lebanese lawyer specialising in the subject, the author was told that the estimated number of individuals who are stateless or whose citizenship status is undecided is in the region of 60,000 to 80,000. Another indicator is that the

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<sup>47</sup> Guita G. Hourani, "Lebanon Starts Revoking Citizenship from Those Who Had Irregularly Acquired It in 1994," European University Institute, <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/news/citizenship-news/529-lebanon-starts-revoking-citizenship-from-those-who-had-irregularly-acquired-it-in-1994>.

<sup>48</sup> Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, ," 261.

<sup>49</sup> Frontiers Ruwad, *Invisible Citizens*.

<sup>50</sup> Furthermore The so-called ‘Palestinian seven villages’ in south Lebanon, and the area of Wadi Khāled in the north-east, are cases in which autochthonous populations have been excluded from enjoying full citizenship. el-Khoury and Jaulin, "Country Report: Lebanon," 7; Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932," 228.

<sup>51</sup> D. Chatty, "Bedouin in Lebanon: The Transformation of a Way of Life or an Attitude?," *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care* 6, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>52</sup> The Lebanese system features forms of partial citizenship such as those in which the individual is provided with a status according to which his or her nationality is considered ‘under study’ (*jinsiyya qayd al-dars*) or those who have failed to undertake registration procedures at the time of the first census (*Maktumin al-Qaid*). Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, ," 261; Frontiers Ruwad, *Invisible Citizens*, 49.



naturalisation decree of 1994, which had among its objectives normalizing the status of some denizens, naturalized more than 150,000 individuals.<sup>53</sup>

The political community of Lebanon has created a particularly exclusive group which Maktabi defines as a “membership organisation”.<sup>54</sup> It developed throughout a contradictory process, shaped by the confessional dynamics of the Lebanese system. According to Maktabi, citizenship in Lebanon “enable[s] the regime to dominate in compliance with its overall objective: the maintenance of its rule in accordance with its implicitly and explicitly expressed state-idea.”<sup>55</sup> Jaulin has highlighted how the debate between Antoun Saade and Michel Chiha epitomises the difference in views on Lebanese national identity. Chiha’s Lebanese nationalism prevailed over Saade’s Pansyrianism, purporting Lebanon as a country of emigrants but not a country of destination for immigration. It is for this reason that nationality law and naturalisation procedures “have become an instrument of the struggle for the allocation of power within the structure of the confessional system and for the domination of political elites.”<sup>56</sup>

The latest development on this issue -further highlighting the concern of certain Lebanese sectors of preserving sectarian balances within Lebanese citizenry- regards the procedures of birth registration of Syrian refugees arriving since 2011. Notwithstanding the fact that birth registration of refugee babies does not confer Lebanese citizenship, especially the Christian political leadership has opposed to the

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<sup>53</sup> Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, "Naturalized Citizens," 189.

<sup>54</sup> Rania Maktabi, "The Politics of Membership and Exclusion in a Sectarian State," in *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications*, ed. Nils A. Butenschön, et al., *Contemporary Issues in the Middle East* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 149-52.

<sup>55</sup> Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932," 238.

<sup>56</sup> Jaulin, "« C'est Bien La Loi D'un Pays À Forte Émigration », " 44.

issuing of birth certificate of Syrian new-borns<sup>57</sup> thus increasingly dramatically the possibility that these children will become stateless.

Thus, all refugee populations of Lebanon have to relate to a political community based on particularly exclusive principles that look with concern to phenomena of immigration as potentially unsettling confessional demographic balances. As we shall see, some of these groups have succeeded in progressively integrating with local society, whereas others pay a high price of exclusion even after decades of exile in Lebanon.

### ***Five Cases of Refugee Peoples in Lebanon***

It is within the social and historical context of a form of statehood characterised by confessionalism, geopolitical uncertainty, and exclusive citizenship that several refugee populations were forced to migrate to Lebanon. It should also be mentioned that Lebanon is not a part of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and has always declined to become a resettlement country for refugees. No comprehensive and effective legal framework is in place to regulate the status of asylum seekers but its borders have generally remained open to several refugee movements.<sup>58</sup>

Below we consider five cases from a macroscopic perspective, focusing on religious identity, politicisation, and socio-economic status. Each of these cases produced a different outcome of integration in Lebanese politics and society.

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<sup>57</sup> 'Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Basil in July 2015 reportedly came out against measures taken by Lebanese agencies to register Syrian births in Lebanon warning that doing so was one of the "first indications of sustainable integration for more than 2 million foreigners on our land...which threatens the existence of our country and is also a threat to our identity."' Human Rights Watch, "I Just Wanted to Be Treated Like a Person," (Beirut; Washington: Human Rights Watch, 2016), 32.

<sup>58</sup> In some parts of the Lebanese legislation, for example in the law of 10 July 1962 regulating the access, residence and exit from Lebanon, there are references to the possibility to apply for political asylum under certain conditions. Nevertheless the records of actual application of this law are dubious.

### ***The Armenian Case: Integration***

According to official Armenian sources, the Armenian population in Lebanon numbered up to 250,000 in the 1970s, and then dropped to 150,000 after the civil war.<sup>59</sup> Most Armenians enjoy full citizenship and a decent (sometimes high) social and economic status in Lebanon. They have direct political representation both in parliament and government thus, relatively to other refugee populations, they have become more integrated within the Lebanese state and society, although they maintain a distinguished identity.

By 1925, in Lebanon there were about 40,000 Armenians, their presence due to the persecutions that they had faced in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey since the early 19th century.<sup>60</sup> The treaty of Lausanne was not clear with regard to the possibility of them acquiring citizenship but, in 1924, the French Mandate administration endowed Lebanese citizenship to all the Armenians who wished to opt for it. At this stage in Lebanese history, the Armenian Christian identity fitted well with the interests of France and its Maronite *protégées*, and this facilitated their integration into the Lebanese political community as citizens.<sup>61</sup>

The Armenian political strategy has been characterised, overall, by neutralism and pragmatism. Migliorino defines it “a moderate conservatism *vis-à-vis* the preservation of the consociational system and support for the forces in government.”<sup>62</sup> Armenians have never formed a unified political front; instead their influence was

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<sup>59</sup> Embassy of Armenia to Lebanon, "Armenian Community in Lebanon," <http://lebanon.mfa.am/en/community-overview/>.

<sup>60</sup> Nikola Schagaldian, "Ethnicity and Political Development in the Lebanese-Armenian Community 1925-1975," *The Armenian Review* 36, no. 1 (1983): 48.

<sup>61</sup> Nicola Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria: Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis* (New York and London: Berghahn Books, 2008), 52-55; Tsolin Nalbantian, "Lebanese Power Struggles and Fashioning "Armenian" Space, 1957-1958," *Review of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 2 (2013): 220.

<sup>62</sup> Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 150.

distributed across the political spectrum in the form of different political parties from right wing conservatives to leftist communist groups. Even during the civil war, they resisted the pressures of joining fighting factions – although they have been occasionally target by belligerent groups – and they maintained a stance defined as “positive neutrality”.<sup>63</sup> Armenian violent activity was instead mostly directed against Turkish symbols as part of a transnational struggle, but the impact of this activity on Lebanon remained moderate.<sup>64</sup>

In post-Ṭā'if Lebanon (1989), the Armenian groups carved out their political role in the consociational system, maintaining unchanged representation in parliament and in the government as part of the Christian power-share. This notwithstanding, they suffered a decline in political representation due to demographic decrease, lack of participation in elections, and because of the attempts at marginalisation of the Armenian political groups by other contenders, especially the Sunni group al-Mustaqbal.<sup>65</sup> It is at this point, according to Geukjian<sup>66</sup> that Armenian politics has become less neutral compared to the past. Yet, notwithstanding these changed conditions, Armenian political representation has survived until the time of writing, constituting an exceptional case of political adaptation compared to other refugee populations of Lebanon.

Social and economic integration has also been successful. Notwithstanding the initial situation in the refugee camps of the 1920s, characterised by extreme poverty and

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 149-54; Ohannes Geukjian, "The Policy of Positive Neutrality of the Armenian Political Parties in Lebanon During the Civil War, 1975-90: A Critical Analysis," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>64</sup> Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 154-55.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 184-89.

<sup>66</sup> O. Geukjian, "From Positive Neutrality to Partisanship: How and Why the Armenian Political Parties Took Sides in Lebanese Politics in the Post-Taif Period (1989-Present)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 5 (2009).

the levelling of social classes due to the persecution in Turkey,<sup>67</sup> they have become an influential niche of the Lebanese middle class, with control over important sectors of local production.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, their social embedment has been proven by social and civil activities that are testified by the presence of Armenian schools, media and associations, which have preserved the identity and social role of the Armenian community until today.<sup>69</sup>

Having acquired full citizenship, enjoying political representation, and being active into the economic and social context of Lebanon, Armenians in Lebanon represent the most successful case of refugee population integration into the Lebanese state.

### ***The Kurdish Case: Partial Integration***

Demographic information on the Kurdish<sup>70</sup> presence in Lebanon is scarce. Some records report a Kurdish presence of up to 200,000 before the Lebanese civil war, which dropped dramatically to a few thousand afterward.<sup>71</sup> The UNHCR, in 2008, put the figure at 25,000,<sup>72</sup> but the conflict in Syria has produced further displacement of Kurds

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<sup>67</sup> Migliorino, *(Re)Constructing Armenia*, 75-77.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-35.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-31; 60-68; 200-13.

<sup>70</sup> The definition of Kurdish identity is not uncontroversial. In the case of Lebanon there are two main linguistic groups, which correspond also to different ethnic identities. According to a recent survey by Hourani, half of the Kurds of Lebanon are Merdalli-Muhallam Kurd speakers (Arab-Kurds) while about 25% are Kurmanji speakers (with a closer connection to Turkish identity). The remnant speak Arabic as their first language. According to the same survey Kurds prefer to identify themselves as such in the greatest majority of the cases (75%) instead of considering themselves Lebanese or Muslim. Guita G. Hourani, "The Kurds of Lebanon: Socioeconomic Mobility and Political Participation Via Naturalization," in *LERC Research Paper Series* (The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC), 2011), 60-61.

<sup>71</sup> Embassy of Armenia to Lebanon, "Armenian Community".

<sup>72</sup> Hourani, "The Kurds of Lebanon," 33.

to Lebanon, which has reportedly increased the population significantly.<sup>73</sup> The Kurdish population has not been integrated in Lebanon as fully as the Armenians.

Kurds began to migrate during the Mandate period but their main presence was established between 1940 and 1960. At this point in history, the confessional system was already institutionalised in the National Pact which rendered their integration more difficult.<sup>74</sup> The causes of the Kurdish migration to Lebanon are mainly related to discrimination and violence against them in Turkey, but also to poverty and the need to find better economic opportunities. The second phase of migration, this time mainly from Syria, is related to the fact that Kurds were stripped of citizenship in this country in the late 1950s and early 1960s and then attempted to find better living conditions in Lebanon.<sup>75</sup>

The integration of Kurds in Lebanon has also been problematic because of the complex development of Lebanese citizenship as discussed above. Whereas for the Armenians, French Mandate authorities issued specific legislation to provide them with citizenship, the Kurds had to register with the local authorities to opt for Lebanese legislation on the basis of the Treaty of Lausanne. Some of those Kurds who found refuge in Lebanon in the 1920s failed to apply for citizenship and did not register for the 1932 Census, either because they did not recognise its importance or they thought that their presence in Lebanon would have been transitional.<sup>76</sup> Many of them, as a

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<sup>73</sup> Maya Gebeily, "Syrian Kurds Find No Solace in Lebanon," <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/547090-syrian-kurds-find-no-solace-in-lebanon>.

<sup>74</sup> el-Khoury and Jaulin, "Country Report: Lebanon," 10-11; Farah Kawtharani and Lokman Meho, "The Kurdish Community in Lebanon," *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 19, no. 1/2 (2005): 137-41.

<sup>75</sup> David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd rev. and updated ed. (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris: Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 2004), 485-89.

<sup>76</sup> Kawtharani and Meho, "The Kurdish Community," 139.

consequence, remained without official citizenship and were classified as persons of ‘unknown nationality’. In 1961, an ID card was issued to some including them in the category of ‘unspecified nationality’; eventually in 1962 the status of ‘nationality under study’ was introduced.<sup>77</sup> As a result of this process, Kurds were left, and many of them still are, in a condition of denizenship.

In the earliest phases of their presence in Lebanon, Kurdish political and intellectual activism was related mainly to the assertion of a national Kurdish identity, a project that enjoyed the support of the French Mandate administration.<sup>78</sup> Overall, Kurds had scarce interest in becoming entangled in Lebanese domestic politics. In the 1960s, Kurdish groups began to interact more closely with local political institutions. They established a number of political groups, including nationalist and leftist parties that were characterised by their constant internal divisions and subsequent ineffectiveness in achieving their objectives.<sup>79</sup> The Kurdish constituency became socialised into the clientelist relations of the Lebanese system and established connections with the Druze and – later on – the Sunni political elites. This effort was only partly conducive to the enhancement of their status. They enjoyed increased access to services and were promised full citizenship in the 1960s, but their alliance led only to the ambivalent status of ‘nationality under study’.<sup>80</sup>

In contrast to the Armenians, the Kurds took a belligerent stance in the Lebanese civil war also because they were subject to several violent attacks, especially from the

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<sup>77</sup> Those of unknown nationality are usually referred to as *Maktūmīn* from *Maktūm al-Hawiyya* (translated of concealed identity) those whose nationality is “under study” are referred to as *qayd al-dars*. Hourani, “The Kurds of Lebanon,” 37.

<sup>78</sup> Jordi Tejel Gorgas, “The Kurdish Cultural Movement in Mandatory Syria and Lebanon: An Unfinished Project of “National Renaissance,” 1932–46,” *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 5 (2014).

<sup>79</sup> Lokman I. Meho and Kelly L. Maglaughlin, *Kurdish Culture and Society: An Annotated Bibliography, Bibliographies and Indexes in Ethnic Studies*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 40–45.

<sup>80</sup> Kawtharani and Meho, “The Kurdish Community,” 140.

right wing Christian factions. According to Meho, most Kurdish militants joined the ranks of the Lebanese Communist Party, the Movement of Independent Nasserites, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) or the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). As part of these factions, they fought against the Christian right, but they also opposed the Shiite movement AMAL<sup>81</sup> and its Syrian patrons in the battle for West Beirut in 1983.<sup>82</sup>

In the aftermath of the civil war, many Kurds aligned with the Sunni elite led by al-Ḥarīri and his al-Mustaqbal Movement. The most tangible sign of this was the formation of a Kurdish-based association (the Future Generation, founded in 1997) that has fully embraced the al-Ḥarīri's movement, even renouncing Kurdish identity. Meho reports that more than half of the Kurds in Beirut voted for al-Ḥarīri and allies in 1996 and in 2000.<sup>83</sup> Standing with the Sunni ruling elite could have been a beneficial political move for their inclusion, since the Sunni community had greater political leverage in post-Ṭā'if Lebanon. Not by coincidence, the possibility of acquiring full citizen status for the Kurds materialised with the decree of naturalisation promulgated by al-Ḥarīri's government in 1994. According to Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, around 32,000 individuals, whose status was 'under study' (the majority of them Kurds), were naturalised through this decree.<sup>84</sup> Yet this decree provoked reactions in the sectarian mind-set of Lebanese statehood, and the Christian Maronite leadership of Lebanon filed a claim to the State Consultative Council, which ruled that at least some of the naturalisations were illegal. The status of those who benefitted from the decree remains,

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<sup>81</sup> AMAL, stands for Afwāj al-Muqāwama al-Lubnāniyya, the "Lebanese Resistance Detachments".

<sup>82</sup> Kawtharani and Meho, "The Kurdish Community," 153; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 486-87.

<sup>83</sup> Kawtharani and Meho, "The Kurdish Community," 149, 52-53.

<sup>84</sup> Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, "Naturalized Citizens," 189; Kawtharani and Meho, "The Kurdish Community," 141.



at time of writing, ambivalent.<sup>85</sup> In Lebanon, there is only one party organisation left with a distinct Kurdish identity, the Razkari Party, but this party has no representation in parliament, in government, and in local administration, thus marking a degree of political segregation.<sup>86</sup>

In contrast to the Armenian case, Kurdish religious identity (mostly Sunni) has not played a significant role in their integration. When the Kurds' politicisation took place, their political identity was mainly socialist and secularist, thus unrelated to the domestic confessional structures of Lebanon. Their alliance with the Druze leader Kamāl Junblatt was mainly based on the assumption that the Junblatt family was considered of Kurdish origin. At a later stage, Kurds' relations with the Sunni elite of al-Mustaqbal turned out to be more relevant, but failed to become a means for full integration.

The social and economic conditions of the Kurds in Lebanon reflect their problematic integration. Since the beginning of their presence in Lebanon, Kurds were relegated to the poorest areas of the country.<sup>87</sup> More recently, according to Meho, 85% of the Kurds live on or under the poverty line, and about 60% of them are illiterate. These figures indicate a profound and protracted marginalisation from the social and economic life of Lebanon.<sup>88</sup> Hourani has studied the social mobility of Lebanese Kurds, comparing the changes in socio-economic status of a sample of the Kurdish population within 15 years, and has concluded that the increased, although partial, political integration of the 1990s has had some beneficial effects on the socio-economic

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<sup>85</sup> Hourani and Sensenig-Dabbous, "Naturalized Citizens," 190.

<sup>86</sup> Bahroz Faraydun, "Kurds in Lebanon Lack Political Voice," <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/290920151>.

<sup>87</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 485.

<sup>88</sup> Kawtharani and Meho, "The Kurdish Community," 142-48.

conditions, but education has remained a factor of 'backwardness' for the Kurdish group of Lebanon.<sup>89</sup> An overview of associational activity among Kurds in Lebanon also highlights a mixed situation. Kawtharani and Meho mention that, of a number of the most influential associations that have been set up by Kurdish groups, only few have active schooling activity; the majority of them are active in providing basic services such as health, but most prominent is their political role either in bridging Lebanese-Kurdish relations or in preserving Kurdish identity and nationalism.<sup>90</sup>

Compared to the Armenian case, Kurdish refugees in Lebanon have not enjoyed the same degree of integration into political, socio-economic, and religious life. The possibility for the Kurds to obtain full citizenship has been constantly hampered, and also today has been only partly achieved; their social and economic condition is relatively low and marginalised; and politically they do not enjoy official representation at any level. Instead they have relied on groups already in power to obtain at least partial political influence.

### ***The Palestinian Case: Segregation***

Until 2011, the Palestinians were the largest refugee group in Lebanon. At the time of writing, about 450,000 Palestinian refugees are registered in Lebanon according to the UN Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Syrian crisis that began in 2011 has caused the displacement to Lebanon of at least 50,000 Palestinians in addition to those already there.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Hourani, "The Kurds of Lebanon," 55-7.

<sup>90</sup> Kawtharani and Meho, "The Kurdish Community," 142-50.

<sup>91</sup> Government of Lebanon and UNHCR, "Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16," (Beirut: Government of Lebanon and UNHCR, 2014), 15.

Palestinian presence in Lebanon began to be significant after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. As a consequence of this conflict and the military operations of Israel in Palestinian land, 104,000 Palestinians fled to Lebanon, where they settled mostly in camps in which they could access the limited services provided by an ad hoc UN agency the UNRWA.<sup>92</sup> Subsequently, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the Black September conflict of 1970 in Jordan generated another flight of Palestinian refugees to Lebanon.<sup>93</sup>

In international law, Palestinians are recognised as refugees not by virtue of the 1951 refugee convention, but with reference to the statute of UNRWA. In Lebanon they have not been acknowledged refugee status (as it is often the case in Arab countries); instead they have been ascribed to the category of “stateless foreigners”. This ambivalent legal status is worsened by several restrictions to fundamental rights. For instance, Palestinians can legally work only in very few labour-intensive sectors; their right to movement is affected by restrictions due to a lack of an official passport and visa regulations; their access to services as health and education is restricted, they do not have a right to own private property, and Palestinians living in the camps are affected by insufficient services, inadequate housing and scarce access to fundamental goods, due to overcrowding and limited funding available to UNRWA. In post-Ṭā’if Lebanon, things have not significantly changed for Palestinians. The 1994 naturalisation decree did not benefit Palestinians, because those who were naturalised were subsequently “denaturalised” by a court judgement.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 99.

<sup>93</sup> Michael C. Hudson, "Palestinians and Lebanon: The Common Story," 10, no. 3 (1997).

<sup>94</sup> A. Knudsen, "Widening the Protection Gap: The 'Politics of Citizenship' for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon, 1948-2008," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no. 1 (2009); UNRWA, "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near East," United Nations, [www.unrwa.org](http://www.unrwa.org).

Palestinians' politicisation in Lebanon is directly connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict in its regional as well as Lebanese dynamics. Their presence in Lebanon, but also irresponsible national policies, has exacerbated Lebanon's geopolitical uncertainty, widening the gap between pan-Arabist and leftist nationalist factions and pro-western Lebanese nationalist groups. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Palestinian activism increased, especially after the 1969 Cairo Agreement, which allowed the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) to operate freely in the camps, and when groups as the PLO and the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) shifted their operations from Jordan to south Lebanon.<sup>95</sup>

When the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, and in contrast to the Armenian and Kurdish cases, the Palestinian factions were directly involved from its inception and are considered among the principal causes of the conflict. In 1982, during the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Palestinian belligerence was in decline after a long and bloody battle against Israeli forces, Lebanese Christian militias as the Kata'eb, and the Shiite movement AMAL. The conflict between Palestinians and the Lebanese peaked with the massacres of Şabrā and Shatīla camps, when more than a thousand Palestinians were killed in a few days by Lebanese Christian militias in October 1982.<sup>96</sup> Subsequently, the War of the Camps (1985-1987) broke out between Palestinian armed groups and AMAL (with the support of the Syrian regime) which was trying to contain the role of Palestinian factions expanding the influence of Lebanese armed groups and safeguarding Syrian interests in Lebanon.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Hudson, "Palestinians and Lebanon," 251-55; Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 156-63.

<sup>96</sup> Fawwāz Ṭarābulṣī, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London ; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto, 2007), 214-19.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 230, 33; Joe Stork, "The War of the Camps, the War of the Hostages," *MERIP Reports* 1985.

With the Ṭā'if Agreement of 1990, hostilities have subsided, but the Palestinians, and in particular their militarised factions, have remained a source of tension and sometimes conflict; for example, in 2007 the Lebanese Army besieged and then destroyed the Palestinian Camp of Nahr al-Bārid where armed Palestinian groups such as Fataḥ al-Islām were operating.<sup>98</sup> In 2005, the Lebanese Government established the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, the first attempt to address the Palestinian question through an institutionalised process but, thus far, it has failed to advance significantly the degree of integration of Palestinians in Lebanon.<sup>99</sup>

The contentious political and military role of Palestinian factions in Lebanon has been matched by a very poor socio-economic situation. This is epitomised by the fact that, differently from all other cases, half of the Palestinians of Lebanon are living in camps. Their socio-economic marginalisation has been widely documented and includes limits and prohibitions that, as mentioned above, affect their right to work, the right to movement and access to basic services such as health, and education among others.<sup>100</sup>

Within this context of segregation, notwithstanding the long-term, their social and political integration has always been considered a taboo by almost the totality of the Lebanese. The very idea of naturalisation (*tawṭīn*) has never been accepted as a possibility.<sup>101</sup> The most common opinion is that naturalising Palestinians would deprive

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<sup>98</sup> Samer Abboud, "The Seige of Nahr Al-Bared and the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 1/2 (2009).

<sup>99</sup> Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, "Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 2 (2010): 156.

<sup>100</sup> Sari Hanafi, Jad Chaaban, and Karin Seyfert, "Social Exclusion of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Reflections on the Mechanisms That Cement Their Persistent Poverty," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2012); Sayigh, *Palestinians*, 111-18; Hudson, "Palestinians and Lebanon," 258; Maha Shuayb, "The Art of Inclusive Exclusions: Educating the Palestinian Refugee Students in Lebanon," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2014): 24-27; Knudsen, "Widening the Protection Gap."

<sup>101</sup> Hanafi, Chaaban, and Seyfert, "Social Exclusion of Palestinian Refugees," 42; Simon Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Opposition to Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon," *International Migration Review* 38, no. 2 (2004).

them of the right to return to Palestine; less official – although equally corroborated – stances include the fact that the sizable Palestinian population (mostly Sunni) would unsettle Lebanon's sectarian balances.<sup>102</sup> Aside from Lebanon being part of several international or regional treaties acknowledging Palestinian refugee status or special status, the most common legal denomination for Palestinians in Lebanon remains that of 'foreigner'.<sup>103</sup>

Palestinian religious identity has not constituted a factor of integration. Somewhat similarly to the case of the Kurds, Palestinian groups were secular and therefore never fully resorted to their mainly Sunni identity to facilitate their integration into the confessional political system.<sup>104</sup> Even when Islamist groups emerged among the Palestinians at a later stage, these nevertheless clashed with the Lebanese establishment.<sup>105</sup> The only case in which religious identity made a difference was in the case of Palestinian Christians. Although there is no official statistic, it is commonly acknowledged that Palestinian Christians have been granted citizenship via presidential decree.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Opposition."; Knudsen, "Widening the Protection Gap," 56.

<sup>103</sup> Souheil Al-Natour, "The Legal Status of Palestinians in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no. 3 (1997): 361-63.

<sup>104</sup> In post-civil war Lebanon Islamist Palestinian factions emerged in Lebanon. See Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Hanafi, Chaaban, and Seyfert, "Social Exclusion of Palestinian Refugees."

<sup>105</sup> A different question concerns Hezbollah's relations with Hamas, but also in this case, it has been noticed, the connection is far from being a straight forward alliance. See Laleh Khalili, "'Standing with My Brother': Hizbullah, Palestinians, and the Limits of Solidarity," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 02 (2007). See also Hanafi and Long, "Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception," 151-55.

<sup>106</sup> Jaulin, "Citizenship, Migration, ," 263; Hudson, "Palestinians and Lebanon," 248-50.

The limited scope of this analysis prevents a more accurate account of Palestinian status in Lebanon,<sup>107</sup> but the above highlights how the politicisation of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon has always been highly contentious. In contrast to the adaptive stances of the Armenian groups and the intermediate case of the Kurds, Palestinian politicisation has exposed and exacerbated the weaknesses of Lebanese statehood, especially as concerns its geopolitical uncertainty. The military activity of the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon has subsequently caused the stigmatisation of Palestinian refugees as those responsible for Lebanon's civil war and for its protraction, which in turn sanctioned their social marginalisation.

In contrast to the cases of Kurds and Armenians, Palestinians in Lebanon have been segregated. The contentious politicisation of Palestinian groups, as opposed to a more neutralist stance, has directly questioned Lebanese statehood. Religious identity and a low economic status either pre-empted or were irrelevant in easing Palestinian relations with the host state. Nowhere else in the Middle East has the presence of Palestinian refugees been as problematic as it has been in Lebanon.

### ***The Iraqi Case: Informal Accommodation***

The conflicts that have shaken the Middle East since the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq have caused a new phase of forced displacement in the region. Iraqi refugees in the Middle East reached a peak of about 2.5 to 3 million in 2007.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See for example Rex Brynen, "The Politics of Exile: The Palestinians in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 3, no. 3 (1990); Sayigh, *Palestinians*; R. Siklawi, "The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon," *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (2010); Brynen, "PLO Policy in Lebanon."; Hanafi, Chaaban, and Seyfert, "Social Exclusion of Palestinian Refugees."; Knudsen, "Widening the Protection Gap.".

<sup>108</sup> Joseph Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 5.

From 2003, Iraqis began fleeing to Lebanon, often after staying in Syria for a short time. Before then, about 10,000 Iraqis were already in Lebanon as a result of the persecutions of Saddam Hussein's regime.<sup>109</sup> By 2007, their number had increased to at least 50,000 and unofficial estimates count up to 150,000 Iraqis in Lebanon.<sup>110</sup> At a later stage, the official numbers provided by the government and the UNHCR have declined significantly and, in 2013, about 6,000 refugees and asylum seekers were reported as registered in Lebanon. However, this figure refers only to regularly registered refugees, whereas in all probability there still are thousands of Iraqis in the country without legal permits and not accounted for in official statistics.<sup>111</sup>

As in the previous cases, the legal status of this group of refugee is difficult to determine. The UNHCR in 2003 has drafted a Memorandum of Understanding with the Lebanese authorities; according to this, those Iraqis that are given refugee status by the UNHCR will benefit from a visa to stay in Lebanon for a maximum of 12 months, with the hope that this would have been sufficient time to make arrangements for the resettlement of refugees. Twelve months were not sufficient to resettle the thousands of Iraqi that had arrived in Lebanon since 2003 and the greatest majority of them remained in the country without a legal permit. On several occasions, Lebanese authorities have granted the possibility to regularise the situation of Iraqis whose visa had expired, but the procedure was either too expensive or dependent on conditions such as regular employment, and only few could actually acquire a regular status.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>110</sup> Danish Refugee Council, "Iraqi Population Survey," (Beirut: DRC and UNHCR, 2007).

<sup>111</sup> Hassan Jouni, "Les Réfugiés Irakiens Au Liban," *CARIM Notes d'analyse et de synthèse* 21(2009): 1; Dawn Chatty and Nisrine Mansour, "Unlocking Protracted Displacement: An Iraqi Case Study," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2011): 56.

<sup>112</sup> Jouni, "Les Réfugiés Irakiens "; Human Rights Watch, "Rot Here or Die There: Bleak Choices for Iraqi Refugees in Lebanon" (Beirut: Human Rights Watch, 2007).



This situation has subjected some refugees to detention, minimisation of their movement capacity for the fear of being arrested, and even to refoulement. As Trad and Frangieh observed, Iraqis have been at risk of becoming ‘Palestinized’<sup>113</sup> and several reports from human rights organisations have criticised the use of detention measures or forced return against Iraqi refugees.<sup>114</sup>

As concerns the socio-economic conditions of Iraqi refugees, reports indicate a population whose economic and social status is significantly higher than previous cases. A 2005 survey shows that about 40% of the refugees were previously employed in Iraq, and half of them were in highly skilled positions, with 15% being the owner of small enterprises. Furthermore, a significant proportion of refugees owned private property and real estate, at least until their departure from Iraq.<sup>115</sup> Also, the level of education is noticeably higher; almost 10% of the sample surveyed by the Danish Refugee Council in 2005 had university level education, and about 50% had received primary and/or intermediate education.<sup>116</sup> In contrast to the other refugee populations, Iraqis are significantly more skilled, educated, and relatively affluent. This is also related to the fact that the great majority of these refugees are from Baghdad,<sup>117</sup> whereas other refugees are often from rural areas, thus having different skills and economic status. However, Iraqi forced migration has produced a sharp decline in their economic conditions due to the need of ‘buying their access’ to host countries at a high price.

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<sup>113</sup> "Iraqi Refugees in Lebanon: Continuous Lack of Protection," *Forced Migration Review*, Jun 2007 2007, 36.

<sup>114</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Rot Here or Die There."

<sup>115</sup> Danish Refugee Council, "Iraqi Population in Lebanon: Survey Report," (Beirut: Danish Refugee Council, 2005), 46-47.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>117</sup> Chatty and Mansour, "Unlocking Protracted Displacement," 58.

The Iraqi presence in Lebanon has kept a very low profile, which has isolated the refugees from the tumultuous political dynamics of the host country. Although the Iraqi crisis has polarised the entire region, the mass displacement of Iraqis has not had significant destabilising effects in Lebanon and Jordan in political terms. Reinoud Leenders has observed that on no occasion has the Iraqi refugee crisis represented a security issue for host countries, nor have refugees' grievances played directly into the political dynamics of Lebanon or Jordan.<sup>118</sup>

The question of religious identity has been particularly influential as to how Iraqis have related to Lebanon as host country. Sassoon interestingly has observed that – compared to other receiving countries – Lebanon is the only state that has hosted a majority of Iraqi Shia refugees (57%) and a significant amount of Christian Iraqis.<sup>119</sup> The sectarian composition of Lebanon may have been one of the reasons Iraqi refugees chose this country as a destination. Indeed, a report from the Danish Refugee Council has found that “Iraqis living in Lebanon tend to settle and associate according to religion.”<sup>120</sup> The same is confirmed by Chatty and Mansouri, who observe that the role of religious charities and charities related to local political parties has relieved the living conditions of Iraqis in Lebanon, thanks to their religious connections in a more significant measure than in Jordan and Syria.<sup>121</sup> For Iraqis, religious affiliation has played a role as a channel for transnational solidarity, facilitating access to aid and services and then allowing for a degree of informal integration, at least in temporarily.

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<sup>118</sup> Reinoud Leenders, "Refugee Warriors or War Refugees? Iraqi Refugees' Predicament in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon," *Mediterranean Politics* 14, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>119</sup> Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees*, 96.

<sup>120</sup> Danish Refugee Council, "Findings from Iraqi Outreach Activities in Lebanon," (2009), 10.

<sup>121</sup> Chatty and Mansour, "Unlocking Protracted Displacement," 74-75.

Even though the Iraqi refugee crisis is a more recent phenomenon than the previous cases, its analysis through the prism of Lebanese statehood has, also in this case, an explanatory value. The fact that Lebanon does not have a legal framework for refugees has rendered the formalisation of Iraqi presence in this country difficult, thus causing a degree of segregation of Iraqis from local society. Yet three factors have facilitated at least a partial and informal accommodation of Iraqis in Lebanon. Firstly, Iraqi presence has been low profile and did not unsettle political balances. As Sassoon reports, the absence of major political objections to Iraqi presence in Lebanon and the fact that no significant security incidents have taken place indicates that although very difficult, the Iraqi situation in this country is not existentially threatening.<sup>122</sup> Secondly, Iraqi refugees enjoy a social and economic status – in terms of education and economic assets – unmatched by other populations, and this has enhanced their capacity to mingle with the host community. Finally, religious identity seems to have played a role in softening the impact of Iraqi presence in Lebanon. All data available confirms that Iraqis in Lebanon take advantage of transnational religious bonds as means of integration or at least to access aid, thus, in contrast to the Kurdish and Palestinian case, religious identity is a factor contributing to the informal accommodation of this population in Lebanon.

### ***The Syrian Case: An Interim Assessment***

From 2011 onwards, Lebanon has become the receiving country of Syrian refugees displaced by the civil war. By early 2015, about 1.3 million Syrians were registered with the UNHCR.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees*, 95.

<sup>123</sup> Government of Lebanon and UNHCR, "Lebanon Crisis Response," 3.

As in the Iraqi case, this unprecedented wave of refugees could acquire only an ambivalent legal status in the absence of a legal framework for refugee protection. An important difference is that Syria-Lebanon relations have been regulated by a Treaty of Brotherhood and Cooperation, which includes the free movement of Syrians and Lebanese across the border. From 2011 until the end of 2014, Syrians could cross into Lebanon freely, also because the government (or the lack thereof) has not taken measures on the matter.

Since 2015, new regulation has been implemented by the government with the objective of limiting the flux of Syrians into Lebanon and rendering more difficult – if not impossible – the lawful stay of Syrian refugees in the country.<sup>124</sup> Those refugees who could enjoy sponsorship from Lebanese businesses or had sufficient economic capacity, can acquire a permit to stay in Lebanon at least for the length of their employment. Yet, the greatest majority of Syrians have remained in Lebanon informally, often with expired permits and mostly sheltered in informal settlements because the construction of camps has been purposely avoided, so as not to replicate the Palestinian experience. The UNHCR has implemented *prima facie* registration of Syrians as refugees, but under domestic legislation, Syrian refugees are not recognised as such; instead they are identified as *nāziḥin*, ‘displaced’, in an attempt to circumvent the responsibilities that are recognised to refugees by international law.

The ambivalent status of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has inevitably brought about a precarious socio-economic situation. Reports in 2015 observed that 29% of the Syrian refugee population cannot fulfil their minimum needs. Furthermore, access to health is rendered difficult by the massive influx of population in a country with

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<sup>124</sup> For an overview of the political debate on Syrian presence in Lebanon and the implementation of related regulations see Filippo Dionigi, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: State Fragility and Social Resilience," (Middle East Centre, LSE, 2016).

underdeveloped welfare infrastructures, and 66% of Syrian refugee children cannot access education.<sup>125</sup>

The question of Syrians' politicisation is particularly complex. As was explained above, Syrian-Lebanese relations are an acrimonious issue at the very core of the problematic nature of Lebanese statehood. Therefore, the politicisation of the massive Syrian presence in Lebanon risks exacerbating the ambivalence of Lebanon's geopolitical identity. Nevertheless, Syrian refugees in Lebanon have overall been perceived as a humanitarian issue thus far, and have remained isolated from domestic political antagonisms.

This notwithstanding, there have been signs of a possible politicisation of Syrians in Lebanon. One case, for example, relates to the Syrian refugee population in the area of Aarsal which, in some instances, has been infiltrated by Syrian Islamist militias involved in the civil war. This has caused security concerns, especially among the Lebanese political sectors that oppose the Salafist groups of Syria. In August 2014, clashes erupted between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and locally based militia. Subsequently, the LAF raided the settlement in the area trying to expel bellicose presence.<sup>126</sup>

Another critical phase, showing how the Syrian refugee population is susceptible to contentious politicisation, took place during the electoral consultation of May 2014. al-Asad's regime allowed voting from abroad, and tens of thousands of Syrians flocked to the Syrian Embassy in Beirut chanting for al-Asad in a show of support for the Syrian

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<sup>125</sup> Government of Lebanon and UNHCR, "Lebanon Crisis Response," 13-15.

<sup>126</sup> BBC, "Lebanese Army Raids Syrian Refugee Camps in Aarsal," BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29370839>.

regime.<sup>127</sup> The mobilisation caused disruption and raised the concern within Lebanon's political groups that the refugee population was more amenable than expected to political mobilisation from external actors. It is perhaps not coincidental that the Lebanese government began to implement its restraining policies towards the refugee influx soon after these events.

Empirical research on the politicisation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has identified an emerging pattern of increasing neutrality among refugees. This seems to be a response to the evolving nature of the conflict in Syria, but also to the increased awareness of the risks that Syrians run by becoming pawns of Lebanese and Syrian political dynamics.<sup>128</sup>

The degree of politicisation of Syrian refugees, and the character of this process remains an open question but – consistently with what has been noticed in the previous cases – phenomena of politicisation have been concurrent with restrictive measures from the government that limit the integration of refugees or, in some cases, even sanction their segregation.

Religious identity is another aspect that cannot be neglected. The overwhelming majority of Syrians are Sunni and the magnitude of the crisis may alter the sectarian proportions of the Lebanese confessional system. Most political groups claiming to represent the Christian Lebanese community interpret this as a risk for the integrity of the national identity of Lebanon. It is not a coincidence that Christian political leaders have been the most vociferous promoters of the restrictive policies towards Syrian

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<sup>127</sup> Jim Muir, "Syria Election: Refugees Vote in Lebanon and Jordan," BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-27599868>; Associated Press, "Syrians in Lebanon Battle Crowds to Vote for Bashar Al-Assad," The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/28/syrians-lebanon-vote-assad-embassies-refugees-boycott>.

<sup>128</sup> Nicolas Dot-Pouillard and Jean-Baptiste Pesquet, "Les Réfugiés Syriens Au Liban: L'émergence Progressive D'un Discours De Neutralité ?," *Confluences Méditerranée* 1, no. 92 (2015).

presence and its protraction. Similar to the previous cases, then, religious identity plays a role in the prospect of managing Syrian presence in Lebanon in the long term, because it impacts on the status quo of its confessional politics.

Although the Syrian refugee crisis is still unfolding at the time of writing, the case features all the characteristics that have been observed for the previous cases. Indeed, these previous cases will play an important role in assessing the issues that the Syrian refugee presence raises in Lebanon.

Lebanon has been extraordinarily open and resilient to the flux of Syrian refugees, at least until 2015. Religious identity and socio-economic status play a role in the reception of this unprecedented phenomenon of forced migration into Lebanon. Perhaps most importantly, the possibility of politicisation of Syrian refugee presence may cause attrition between refugees and the Lebanese, since this process can become politically contentious, and be perceived as a challenge for Lebanese statehood in its confessional structures, its geopolitical role and for the presumed integrity of its political community.

### **Comparative Analysis: Politicisation, Religious Identity, and Socio-Economic Status of Refugees in the Context of Lebanese Statehood**

We have proposed a conceptualisation of the Lebanese state as characterised by three key elements: confessional politics, geopolitical uncertainty, and exclusive political community. Subsequently, we have overviewed how five refugee populations have interacted within this context. All cases corroborate the idea of states and refugees being political and social actors that are hard to reconcile, for the reasons that have been persuasively theorised by Arendt, Agamben, Rae, and Haddad among others. But, in addition to this, the variance in degrees of integration or segregation shows that different refugee groups establish different relations with their host state. There is a

degree of complexity in the state-refugee relations that remains unnoticed if we rely on a simple dichotomy between modern statehood and refugees and the way this complexity manifests depends on how refugees interact with the key components of statehood.

Three main observations on the basis of a comparison of these cases are in place here. Firstly, in the medium to long-term, all refugee groups become politicised. From mere humanitarian identity as ‘subjects in need’ of refuge, aid, and protection, they subsequently shift to a role in which their social and political agency emerges. As a consequence, refugees engage in social and political activity to carve out a space of inclusion in the host state and increase their entitlement to rights, services, social status, and eventually political representation. This process can be understood as what Engin Isin considers ‘acts of citizenship’, i.e. “those acts that transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into being new actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating new sites and scales of struggle.”<sup>129</sup>

Within this process of politicisation, integration or partial integration is more common when a refugee population takes either adaptive or neutral stances towards Lebanese statehood, whereby the political identity of refugees is embedded in the pre-existing political structures of the host state. We have seen how the Armenians, in part the Kurds, and – to a different extent – the Iraqis have acquired an existential space in Lebanese society by avoiding a contentious approach to Lebanese statehood in political terms. Instead, they tried to get the most out of the pre-existing socio-political conditions such as confessionalism, using these as leverage for inclusion or at least for a degree of protection within the Lebanese state.

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<sup>129</sup> Isin, "Acts of Citizenship," 39.



The Palestinian case, conversely, provides counterfactual evidence of the above. When politicisation occurs in terms that are highly contentious for Lebanese statehood, the harshest form of segregation follows. Palestinian political presence in Lebanon has meddled with Lebanese geopolitical uncertainty, exacerbating its already problematic internal polarisation. Instead of subscribing to an adaptive political stance, whereby Palestinian political groups would have been a function of Lebanese confessional politics; Palestinian militants have played into the fractured confessional and political structures of the state, provoking a harsh form of segregation by Lebanese political elites whose power and existence is entirely dependent on such structures.

The second observation is that religious identity plays an ambiguous role, which can facilitate the co-optation of refugees into sectarian structures but, conversely, can increase the perceived risk of unsettling the precarious (im)balances of Lebanon's confessional system. The fact that Palestinian political groups have been mostly secular for a long time has prevented them from using religious identity as an entry point into the confessional structures of Lebanon, to take advantage of protection from the Sunni elite. Also, when Islamism emerged among Palestinians, the Lebanese Sunni elite (which are only minimally involved with Islamism) did not take Palestinians under their protection.

Yet in other cases, when Armenian Christian identity fitted with the project of a prevalently Christian Lebanese state or in the case of Christian Palestinians, for example, religious identity was a vehicle of integration if matched with adaptive politicisation. Consistently, as long as the Kurds were mainly identified with leftist secular political actors, they did not enjoy much integration. Only later, when they began to be more closely related to the Sunni political elite, were they promised

enhanced socio-political status.<sup>130</sup> Also, in the case of the Iraqi refugees, their mixed confessional composition has facilitated their access to local networks. Indeed, the Iraqi presence, with its multi-confessional composition, fit within the Lebanese confessional complexity instead of constituting a challenging factor.

The Syrian case is more recent, and unprecedented in its magnitude. The parameters of politicisation, religious identity, and socio-economic status warn us that politicisation and religious identity risk exposing the Syrian population to increasing segregation. It has been highlighted that when signs of politicisation from the Syrians occurred, the Lebanese state responded with restrictive measures. This is sign of an incipient marginalisation or even segregation of the Syrian population in the long term, should politicisation become contentious. Syrian religious identity is also potentially unsettling being skewed towards the Sunni Muslim group.<sup>131</sup> Thus, the risks of exclusion are high and expose the Syrian population to the dangers of a 'Palestinization' of their condition. If religious identity becomes a further cause of attrition with Lebanese statehood, this may further heighten the possibility of their marginalisation.

The third parameter of the analysis was the socio-economic status of refugee populations. In this respect, of the five cases analysed, the Iraqi situation stands out, for a relatively high level of education and material wealth. This aspect has rendered their relative integration easier by 'paying their way' into Lebanon and helping them to merge with its middle income society. But the other cases, in which education and wealth levels were lower, show that high social and economic standards are not a necessary condition for integration. The Armenians or the Kurds, for example, were

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<sup>130</sup> Hourani, "The Kurds of Lebanon," 37-41.

<sup>131</sup> It is important to consider that although the Lebanese confessional system claim to be representative of the actual interests of its religious groups there still is a gap between state and society and what Christian, Muslim or Druze political elites do or declare does not necessarily reflects the actual interest of their respective communities at large.

poor – especially at the beginning – but they nevertheless integrated (to different extents) and enhanced their socio-economic status. The Syrian refugee population is poor overall, and the costs of residency, visa taxations and the prohibition to work are further impoverishing them. Nevertheless, Syrians have a long history of economic migration to Lebanon<sup>132</sup> which constitutes an important precedent for their possible contribution to Lebanese economy. This latter aspect should not be misunderstood, however; poverty and low social status inevitably cause isolation from the host society and economy in the long term. Instead, what was highlighted herein is that in the early phase of migration, the low social and economic status of a refugee population does not necessarily constitute an insurmountable problem for progressive integration.

## Conclusions

It was noted at the outset that the contemporary scholarly debate conceptualises the nexus between refugees and modern statehood as inherently problematic.

All the cases considered in this study clearly show this tension between Lebanese statehood and refugees. Refugee presence is perceived as a challenge to the constitutive elements of Lebanese statehood: confessionalism, geopolitical uncertainty, and the exclusiveness of the political community. For each of these aspects, refugees expose the fragility of Lebanon's statehood with regard to its confessional (im)balances, highlighting its ambivalent regional and international stances, and questioning the exclusive nature of citizenship.

But adopting a perspective that contextualises statehood in its historical specificity, and then juxtaposing this conception with the experiences of different refugee populations allows us to develop a more thorough understanding of the

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<sup>132</sup> John T. Chalcraft, *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008).

interaction between refugees and host states. We have seen that the degrees of integration and segregation of refugee populations in Lebanon are different, and render each experience unique on the basis of how the state-refugee relation unfolds.

To explain the variance of these cases we cannot rely on a simple dichotomy whereby ‘the modern state’ is crudely contrasted with ‘refugees’; instead investigating the social and historical specificity of Lebanon’s statehood and the way in which refugees have interacted with it has shed light on a more complex reality.<sup>133</sup>

Isolating the key components of statehood and then comparing the ways in which different refugees have developed survival strategies in this context has allowed an explanation of the variations in the way they establish state-refugee relations.

This methodology has led to the conclusion that those cases in which refugees could contribute to the consolidation of the state, or at least remain neutral towards the pre-existing conditions of statehood, have resulted in forms of integration or partial integration. In these cases, refugees have become parts of Lebanon’s statecrafting.<sup>134</sup>

In those cases in which Lebanon’s statehood has been challenged by refugee presence -in which “the fiction of sovereignty has been brought to crisis”, in Agamben’s words-<sup>135</sup> segregation, or even the physical elimination of refugees, has occurred. Instead of becoming factors of state consolidation, the contentious politicisation of refugees has caused their (mis)perception as threats for the state and its ruling elites.

Thus, beyond the idea of a basic dichotomy between refugee and modern statehood, there is the possibility – or perhaps the need – to develop a more complex

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<sup>133</sup> On the importance of historicizing refugee experience see Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, First edition. ed.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii, 312 pages, 288.

<sup>134</sup> As concerns the role of refugees as elements of statecrafting see Nevzat Soguk, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 27-55.

<sup>135</sup> Agamben, *Means without End*, 20.

understanding of the dynamics of refugee-state relations. The perspective on statehood and the subsequent comparison of five cases within the context of Lebanon has been an opportunity to sharpen our insight of state-refugee relations, highlighting more complex patterns of interaction on the basis of more thorough consideration of the social and historical specificity of these relations.